

Dr. Richard Isaacs: Kaiser's summer internship program

Kaiser's summer internship program gives high school students a chance to see if medical field is right for them

Valley High School senior Faith Allison thought she was interested in cardiology when she started a paid internship at Kaiser Permanente's South Sacramento Medical Center this summer, but she liked the variety she saw in trauma.

Luther Burbank graduate Melany Caldera figured "you can't go wrong with health care," but she got dizzy every time she saw blood. Human resources, she likes.

The idea behind the Kaiser internship program is to give underrepresented and low-income students a close-up view of the career promise of health care before they make a career choice. A comprehensive program that focuses on careers in demand, it can also serve as a pipeline for future Kaiser employees.

"It's really important for people who have an interest to see their destination before they begin their journey," said [Dr. Richard Isaacs](#), physician-in-chief at Kaiser's South Sacramento hospital. "Our hope is they will go back to their own community with a better idea of what they can and want to do."

The Summer Youth Employment Program is one of the community benefits Kaiser offers in exchange for tax-exempt status. There are 215 participants in Northern California this summer, about 30 in the Sacramento area.

Eleven high-achieving students were selected from 150 applicants for internships at Kaiser South Sacramento.

The full-time program runs for eight weeks. Students do workshops, projects and rotations in departments, meet weekly to share information — and get paid \$8 an hour at a time when many high school students have trouble getting a job.

Other local health systems offer internship programs for high school students, too. But most are unpaid.

"Any organized professional experience we can expose young people to — and high school seems to be the focus now — can pique interest in and provide direction for college and medical school," said Scott Seamons, regional vice president of the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California.

A lot of exposure'

Karima Ziyarmal, now 23, was a 2006 summer intern at Kaiser's South Sacramento hospital.